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ABSTRACT

Self awareness is a key element in the effectiveness of teacher performance. To a large extent, however, individual psychology and the growth process have been neglected in the preparation of teachers. Four guidelines can aid prospective teachers to gain strengths they will need in the classroom. The first is increasing student teachers' autonomy in the field, thereby providing the impetus for self direction, decision making skills, and development of responsibility. The second guideline promotes giving prospective teachers insights into the reality of the profession, including its legal implications, how to handle a crisis, and self help techniques. Increasing teachers' emotional and social competence is recommmended as the third guideline, which incorporates encounter group training and exposure to stressful situations while in laboratory conditions. The last guideline calls for increasing awareness and openness to experience through training in behavior therapy skills. (FG)

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Professional Preparation:

A Process of Discovery

by

Janice Wendt

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Professional Preparation:

A Process of Discovery

"Every year sees a craze for some new solution to the teaching enigma, at once simple and infallible," reported H. L. Mencken in 1922. Undoubtedly in every year since 1922, at least one new craze, trend, or answer has been promoted; and now 60 years later and sixty plus new solutions made prominent, Mencken's statement is still quite apropos. This discourse is not another such cure-all to the age-old problem but rather suggests a sense of direction to the future of teacher education as a result of the present problems and short-comings in this age of teacher accountability.

As the teacher educator accepts the challenge of preparing prospective teachers, one must be wary of the enormous task at hand, the bulk of literature, the contradicting research, the "voice of experience," and the threatening climate in which learning takes place. To know what is best to teach and when it is most appropriate seems an impossible task. If one uses today's jargon, should it be peer teaching, mini-teaching, micro-teaching, field experiences, video-taping, on-site observations, Mosston's models, immediate feedback, or a systematic observation and analysis of teaching? With such diverse and complicated tasks at hand, both the teacher educator and prospective teacher must feel they are "tilting windmills" as the knight errant, Don Quixote, did in the 1500's. When the student teaching internship still finds the

prospective teacher unprepared for the experience, the student teacher and public school begins to look at the teacher educator and university as the sorcerer who changed the monsters to windmills and is therefore responsible for the problems.

Does the real problem lie in what method to use and what experience is most important, or does the potential difficulty really lie in the individual who is attempting to become a teacher? What values or limitations does the neophyte have toward teaching? Can the individual handle insecurity, suspicion, and the need for approval? How will the prospective teacher handle stress or unsolicited affection? Is the prospective teacher open to criticism, suggestion, or change?

The most important variable in the classroom is the teacher. The education of teachers should emerge principally then from the needs of the personnel they prepare (Howsam, et al. 1976). Of all the variables affecting teaching behavior, Fuller (1970) contends that the teacher's own concerns are the most powerful. Unfortunately, the needs most often attended to by professional programs relate only to curricular materials, instructional procedures, and evaluation because they are often the easiest to accomplish and change. Even at that however, few teachers believe they were adequately prepared for the complexities and demands of teaching (Howsam et al, 1976). The development of a "human service educator" may be the key to the direction of professional preparation.

B. O. Smith (1969) believes that one of the primary functions of a professional preparation program is to deal with the prospective teachers' feelings about their own limitations, needs for approval, and feelings of inferiority and insecurity as well as paranoia, suspicion and fear. Granted this is difficult under the best of circumstances,and the present structure of college coursework and declining economic support of most colleges' and universities' colleges of education, makes individualization and involvement seem a luxury. Combs (1972) has continually suggested a redirection of teacher education programs. He asserts that teacher education must not be seen as a process of teaching how to teach but as "a process of becoming, of personal discovery, of helping a person to become a teacher beginning from where he/she is (Combs, 1972, p. 287)." These were not the first indications that new teachers had a need for more training in human relationships and that they had a problem in "overcoming personality relationships."

Brainard (1942) recognized this and the need for improvement in the student teaching phase of teaching education calling it the "proving ground" for new teachers. Student teaching still qualifies as a testing arena and hasn't solved the new teacher dilemma yet. We have yet to face this problem and realize that "the production of an effective teacher is a highly personal matter (Combs, 1972, p. 286)." Neither field experience nor student teaching in itself will magically transform the neophyte into an effective teacher. The quality of the experience and the awareness and meaning to the individual is of utmost importance if growth is to occur.

Student teaching as it is today is not "real teaching." Student teachers too often must adjust to the school-based teacher's philosophy toward teaching as well as his/her style of classroom management if they are to survive the experience. Prospective teachers rarely get to find out where they are coming from and what works for them.

The answer doesn't necessarily lie in screening out the individuals who don't measure up during student teaching or those whose personalities and attitudes don't fit the mold of what an effective prospective teacher should be. What is important is to provide information to prospective teachers as to what behavior is occurring and help them deal with it cognitively and emotionally. This process of self-awareness is not accomplished by questionnaire, but by involvement with the individual throughout professional preparation. There is some risk in making prospective teachers aware of their limitations for this insight might cause the individual to self-select into another profession. Many potentially good teachers as well as possible ineffective ones might actually opt for other professional identities where they have fewer problems and a less hostile environment in which to function.

Identifying the needs of individuals as they relate to effective work may be a valuable approach to finding what is effective in teaching. It isn't news that research hasn't given us a clear picture of what an effective teacher is, although there are many varying assertions of what is effective (Getzels and Jackson, 1963, Goodman, 1971, Cattell, 1974, and Kimmel, 1965). Recent studies relate Maslow's theoretical concept of

motivation and needs toward self-actualization with prospective teachers. Neophytes who exhibited qualities of sensitivity, experimentation, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, emotional stability and internal locus of control may be highly motivated to be effective in the role of teaching (Wendt, Ward, and Jackson, 1980, 1982). To be able to exhibit these qualities, self-awareness is extremely vital. If the real issues lie in teacher educators helping prospective teachers become aware of their innate needs, values, beliefs, limitations, and perceptions, might research and study more aptly be directed toward this end if we are to help potential teachers? Part of the problem lies in the fact that there is no centralized effort set up to solve this problem, or more importantly, no consensus that this is the problem. It may be that a failure to attack this problem is also due to a lack of direction given to educators with inadequate information as to how to solve this problem. Would this continual reiteration of the need for individual awareness in new teachers during the 1940's, through the 1970's indicate that this is really a new craze?

What is self-awareness? What does it encompass? Self-awareness is knowing thyself, but it is not as simple as it sounds. A picture of self incorporates self-identity, (Who am I?) as well as self-evaluation, (How worthy and adequate am I?); and self-ideal, (What could I or should I be?). As an individual matures, body image and self-concept gradually become important components of an individual's identity throughout life

(Coleman and Hammen, 1974). Through experience, values and goals become a part of our self-identity. Closely related to self-concept is frame of reference which provides a picture of oneself and the world and provides the individual with assumptions concerning how things really are and how things should and could be. Social change as it affects social norms and roles may actually cause us to restructure our self-concept to include characteristic ways of experiencing and feeling, i. e., anxious, concerned, alienated, etc. (Coleman and Hammen, 1974) Individuals then may actually internalize inadequacy as part of self. The growth process of an individual requires self-awareness and self-acceptance. Psychologists believe that self-awareness is inherently curative and only awareness can lead to growth, change, and full functioning (Coleman and Hammen, 1974). "Change occurs when one becomes what he/she is, not when one tries to become what he/she is not (Beisser, 1970, p.77)." Self-awareness is extremely important if teachers are to function to their fullest potential within the framework of the school setting.

In this process of growth, of becoming, or of personal discovery that Combs and Smith suggest for prospective teachers and professional preparation programs, certain goals must be achieved. Just as the supervisor tells the prospective teachers to "know their students," the same must apply to teacher educators. Coleman and Hammen (1974) provide four guidelines which may be of value in achieving this growth in the prospective teacher. Table 1 provides these guidelines for the individual in the process of discovery and becoming. Since life is not static, needs

and goals change; and growth will not be achieved for a lifetime.

1. Increased autonomy. This provides the impetus for self-direction, decision-making skills, and the development of responsibility. Achieved in various ways in professional preparation, prospective teachers must be required to have initial exposure to "real" teaching experiences either through volunteer and/or paid teaching in non-school agencies. These can be assigned through the university if necessary. Short periods of teaching experience must be required of prospective teachers with exposure to students of various ages in recreational-type settings or mini units in laboratory schools before professional preparation begins. Then the prospective teacher will be ready to relate to the problems and understand the dynamics involved in teaching. The student teaching period at the end of professional preparation then can become a half-time internship in the public schools comparable to the teaching assistant in colleges. Public schools and/or laboratory schools can serve this purpose. Student teachers would teach two or three classes each day for the semester or quarter, evaluate the students, plan lessons, etc. Video-tapes could be used for feedback purposes. Supervisors would be provided as "overseers" jointly by the public schools and universities. The remainder of each day is to be used in problem-solving, developing interpersonal skills, and classwork aimed solely at meeting the needs of prospective teachers as they express their concerns and needs to supervisors and teacher educators at the university. Student teachers

would spend a period of time in observation and assistance with principals, assistant principals, department chairpersons, coaches, and counselors to get a total picture of what schools are about. They would also spend time at parent-teacher meetings, union and professional and inservice meetings, court hearings, and teen counseling and rehabilitation settings, such as drug therapy hospitals, alcoholism and detention centers. These experiences can provide the basis for awareness of students and their problems as well as autonomy for the student teacher.

2. More adequate assumptions concerning reality, possibility and value. This provides the prospective teachers with insight to initiate change or provide direction in issues confronting their success in teaching and becomes the basis for wise decisions and problem solving. The prospective teachers must be made aware of the legal implications surrounding their behavior, learning about contract law, negligence, and liability. Sound classroom management theories must provide the basis for dealing with discipline in the classroom. Values awareness and clarification is important if the prospective teacher is to understand value conflicts, institutional values, and student values. The dynamics of change, how change occurs, and what causes change, must be explored and related to prospective teachers so that they understand that teaching is not static, but is a variable subject to social change. It is important to bring reality into the training period. Help the prospective teacher develop a philosophy toward coping with structured and unstructured situations. Facing and handling crises can help the new teachers

chrystallize their values toward teaching. Student teachers must have the ability to analyze problems and be able to detect problems as well as admit that they exist. Where does optimism, pessimism, and realism fit into the solution? What about healthy paranoia with the feeling that the principal is looking over one's shoulder? Do they understand the difference between healthy (constructive) and unhealthy (destructive) coping mechanisms since the success of a career depends on the choice of coping mechanisms? Can the student recognize dysfunctional coping mechanisms which are generally nonproductive and defensive in nature? The more information the student teachers have about the situation in schools, the more likely they will succeed.

3. Improved competencies. This involves increased intellectual, emotional, and social competence. The subject-matter content is probably where students have been best prepared. However, emotional and social competence have been sorely neglected. Student teachers must improve their coping abilities by learning of stress and coping skills. Bring the stress into the training period where it can be dealt with under laboratory conditions. Encounter group training, and/or dramatic re-creations for student teachers can help them learn how to react under pressure through carefully controlled situations where students are deliberately exposed to stressful aspects of their profession. The purpose of this is to teach objectivity under stress. Through recreations expose them to upset or angry parents, students, and administrators. It is also important to make them aware of the need to develop a network of

professional associates who can help problem solve or give feedback when needed.

4. Increased awareness and openness to experience. Helping prospective teachers adjust to conflict and be less defensive is essential. The prospective teacher can be given experience in handling various problems with parents, students and administrators. Through behavior therapy, these skills can be refined so that the neophyte has the ability and the communication skills to excel. The prospective teacher must be a shrewd observer of non-verbal communication and detecting meta-messages from others, be it students, parents or administrators. Assertiveness training can make the prospective teacher aware of how to handle oneself in the role of teacher. An adaptation of Perls (1969) "hot seat" or "empty chair" technique can give the individual a realistic awareness of oneself and the world. Prospective teachers need to know the hazards of "mind set", and they need to be able to retain experiences and apply them to future situations. It is important to realize that handling stress and confrontations helps prospective teachers cope and chrystallize their own identities and position in issues. The student teachers must be aware of their philosophy toward physical education. They must know why they are teaching and what they hope to accomplish. The teacher educator should help the prospective teachers accurately define their limits and maintain a clearer degree of self-awareness. Developing and maintaining a positive outlook toward teaching is important. One must maintain positive self-esteem as a basis for personal strength. This is

difficult for today's teachers since they face continual charges of incompetency. Help the student teacher recognize role strain and role conflict. Not only is the coach versus teacher a problem, but so is teacher versus counselor or disciplinarian versus counselor. The prospective teacher must know what it is to make a commitment to teaching.

Becoming a teacher and teaching in itself is a difficult task. It becomes increasingly difficult to justify costly teacher preparation programs in physical education in this day of accountability when one learns gymnastics, tennis and/or dance at a private club or at the neighborhood center with novices or highly skilled technicians who are neither "professional teachers" or college graduates. However, their successes abound and provide highly visible evidence that they can "teach". One can only look at the number of requirements dropped and the number of teacher aides who have been hired instead of physical educators and placed in the role of teacher. This value in society is certainly not the result of highly competent and dedicated physical educators in successful programs but rather mirrors the neglect and irresponsibility on the part of the public schools and physical educators to initiate meaningful learning experiences. This is not intended solely as fault finding for physical educators have been plagued with burdens that other teachers have not and would not have allowed. Physical educators, however, have too often attempted to be accommodating "super persons" instead of teachers, for what ever reasons. Prospective

physical educators must be put in the position to achieve success, feel competent, and be aware of their potential.

Although Bernice Marshall (1971) speaks of the relationships between two people in her poem, "Beginning," her words just as clearly describe the problems in professional preparation between the university supervisor and the prospective teacher. It also reflects the magnitude of the problem inherent in the process of becoming, of personal discovery.

I say words
You say words
And I walk alone

You say words
I say words
Words, words, words
And I walk alone

...

What words can I say
That will show you the way...

We must stop meeting like this!

Table 1

The Process of Becoming*

1. Increased autonomy
2. More adequate assumptions concerning reality, possibility, and value.
3. Improved competencies
4. Increased awareness and openness to experience

*Coleman and Hammen Contemporary psychology and effective behavior.

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